

SMARTER BALANCED FIELD TEST PARENT Q & A

Why is my child taking new assessments this year?

- The Nevada Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all of our students are prepared for success.
- The Smarter Balanced Assessment System that we are helping to develop is a key part of implementing the new Nevada Academic Content Standards in English language arts and mathematics and preparing all students for success in college and careers.
- Smarter Balanced assessments are being "field tested" this year and will be fully operational in the 2014–15 school year.
- These assessments will replace existing tests, and offer significant improvements over tests of the past, including new types of questions and performance tasks that require students to apply a variety of skills to complete complex tasks that will prepare them for college and the workplace.

What will the assessments cover?

- The Smarter Balanced assessments will measure real-world skills in English and math, such as analytical reading, persuasive writing, and problem solving.
- Beginning in 2015, in addition to providing composite scores in those two subjects, score reports will
 provide information on student performance in the following areas:
 - o English: reading, writing, listening, and research
 - Math: concepts and procedures; problem solving and modeling/data analysis, and communicating reasoning

How long will the assessments take?

- The math and English assessments each have two components:
 - Computer-adaptive assessments: A set of assessment questions in a variety of formats that—beginning in spring 2015—will be customized to each student based on answers to previous questions. In this way, the assessments can most accurately measure each student's knowledge and skills.
 - Performance tasks: Collections of questions and activities that are coherently connected to a single theme or scenario. These activities are meant to measure capacities such as depth of understanding, writing and research skills, and complex analysis, which cannot be adequately assessed with traditional test questions. The performance tasks will be taken on a computer (but will not be computer-adaptive) and will take one to two class periods to complete.
- These tests are not timed, but we estimate that the English assessment will take 3.5 (for elementary students) to 4 hours (for high school students) and the math assessment will take 2.5 hours (for elementary students) to 3.5 hours (for high school students). In addition, students will have a brief classroom activity to introduce the topic of the performance task. Testing will occur in multiple sessions, so students will typically spend 1 to 2 hours per day on the assessments over several days.
- For the spring 2014 field test, students participating in the field test will take either the English or math assessment. Beginning in 2014-15, when the Smarter Balanced assessments replace existing state tests, students will take both the English and math assessments.

What is the "field test" and what will my child get out of participating in it?

- This practice run will help ensure that the assessments are accurate and fair for all students. It also gives teachers and schools a chance to practice assessment administration procedures, and students the opportunity to experience the new assessments.
- Smarter Balanced will use information from the field test to improve the assessments and plan for their roll-out in the 2014-15 school year.
- Through this practice run, we expect to discover challenges. Working together with teachers and school administrators, states in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium will address any issues identified prior to the launch of the assessment system in the 2014–15 school year.
- In Nevada, students participating in the field test will take either the English or math assessment.

What consequences will occur if I opt my child out of the field test?

- Assessments help to provide valuable information to parents, teachers, and students, and we're
 committed to ensuring that they are as accurate as possible and welcome feedback on ways to
 improve them.
- Ultimately, the greatest penalty for avoiding these assessments is that Nevada's voice will be lessened in setting the passing scores and determining if test questions are right for students.

How will my child's privacy be protected?

- Nevada retains control of all student information, including assessment results.
- In order to make sure the assessments are accurate and fair for all students, Smarter Balanced will collect the following student information:
 - An identification number that is different from the state's official unique student identifier so that only the state can link back to a student's official education record);
 - o Race/ethnicity, gender, grade level, school attended;
 - Student eligibility for English language development services or special education services provided to the student;
 - Student eligibility for Title I compensatory programs;
 - Smarter Balanced assessment scores, achievement levels, and responses to assessment questions.
- Smarter Balanced will not collect information such as student names, dates of birth, addresses, etc. that can be used to identify individual students. No parent information will be collected.
- Smarter Balanced, Nevada, and districts cannot and will not sell student information as prohibited by federal laws like the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.
- Smarter Balanced will not share any personally identifiable information about students with the U.S. Department of Education or any other federal agency or group.